IND.

THE Fantastic FOUR

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

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FEATURING:
"THE THING!"
"MR. FANTASTIC!"
"HUMAN TORCH!"
"INVISIBLE GIRL!"
TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE MIGHTY MAGAZINE!

I--I CAN'T TURN INVISIBLE **FAST** ENOUGH!! HOW CAN WE STOP THIS CREATURE, TORCH?

JUST WAIT AND SEE, SISTER! THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE ONLY **BEGUN** TO FIGHT!

THE THREE OF YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE! IT'S TIME FOR **THE THING** TO TAKE A HAND!

IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN **ROPES** TO KEEP MISTER FANTASTIC OUT OF ACTION!

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TO LET

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WITH THE SUDDEN FURY OF A THUNDERBOLT, A FLARE IS SHOT INTO THE SKY OVER CENTRAL CITY! THREE AWESOME WORDS TAKE FORM AS IF BY MAGIC, AND A LEGEND IS BORN!!

LOOK! IN THE SKY-- WHAT IN BLAZES DOES IT **MEAN?**

I DUNNO, BUT THE CROWDS ARE GETTIN' PANICKY!

RUMORS ARE FLYIN' ABOUT AN ALIEN INVASION!

ABOVE ALL THE HUBBUB AND EXCITEMENT, ONE STRANGE FIGURE HOLDS A STILL-SMOKING FLARE GUN! ONE STRANGE MAN WHO IS SOMEHOW **MORE** THAN JUST A MAN--FOR HE IS THE LEADER OF... THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

IT IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE FOUND IT NECESSARY TO GIVE THE SIGNAL! I PRAY IT WILL BE THE **LAST!**

IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN, SUSAN STORM IS HAVING TEA WITH A SOCIETY FRIEND, WHEN SHE HEARS THE OMINOUS WORDS...

SUSAN...LOOK! THOSE WORDS IN THE SKY! WHAT DO THEY **MEAN?**

SO IT HAS HAPPENED AT LAST! I MUST BE TRUE TO MY VOW!

THERE CAN BE NO TURNING BACK!

SUSAN!! SHE--SHE'S **GONE!** BUT WHERE? HOW?

IT IS TIME FOR THE WORLD TO MEET... **THE INVISIBLE GIRL!**

HEY! WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

SOME--SOMETHING RUSHED PAST ME! SOMETHING **UNSEEN!**

STAND ASIDE! I HAVE NO TIME TO LOSE!

IT--IT'S A **GHOST!**

JUST WHAT I NEED... AN EMPTY CAB!

BOY, WHAT A DULL DAY!

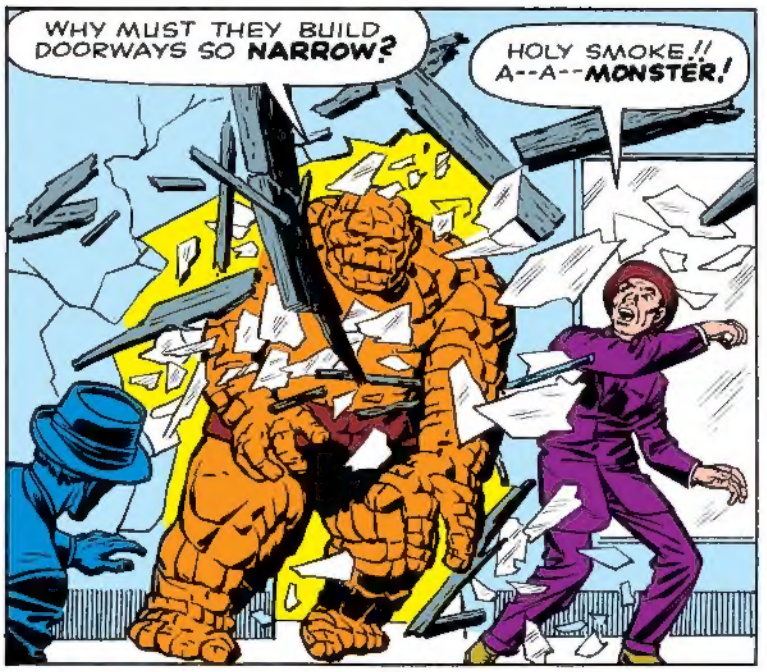
I MIGHT AS WELL CRUISE AROUND UNTIL I PICK ME UP A FARE!

THANK YOU! I WILL GET OUT HERE!

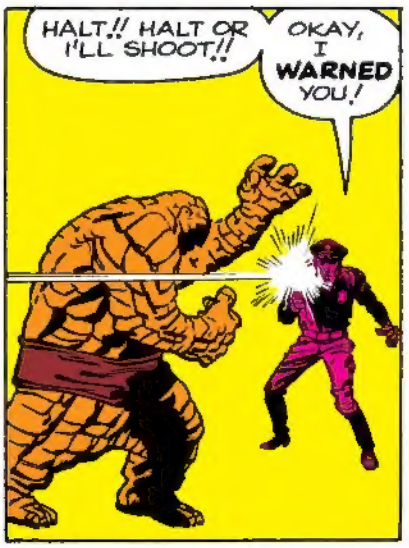
OKAY...

HUH?!! WAIT-- WHO **SAID** THAT?? **WHA--??**

DON'T JUST SIT THERE GAPING, MAN! TAKE YOUR MONEY!
I--I'M HEARIN' THINGS! SEEIN' THINGS! OR-OR NOT SEEIN' THEM!!
GANGWAY! I'M GETTIN' OUT OF HERE!
IT WORKS! I REALLY AM INVISIBLE! COMPLETELY, TOTALLY INVISIBLE! THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT! NOW, ALL THAT REMAINS IS... MY MISSION!
BUT LET US LEAVE THE AMAZING INVISIBLE GIRL AND TURN OUR ATTENTION TO A MEN'S CLOTHING STORE, IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN...
I'M SORRY, MISTER, I JUST DON'T CARRY ANYTHING BIG ENOUGH TO FIT A MAN YOUR SIZE!
BAH! EVERYWHERE IT IS THE SAME! I LIVE IN A WORLD TOO SMALL FOR ME!
LOOK! OUT THE WINDOW IN THE SKY!
THOSE WORDS... "THE FANTASTIC FOUR"! WHAT CAN THEY MEAN?
SO! THE TIME HAS COME!
WAIT, DON'T BOTHER TAKING OFF YOUR COAT... I TOLD YOU WE HAVEN'T ANYTHING IN YOUR SIZE...
YOUR--YOUR-- SIZE...
OH NO...
WHAT A RELIEF TO GET RID OF THOSE TIGHT RAGS!
3

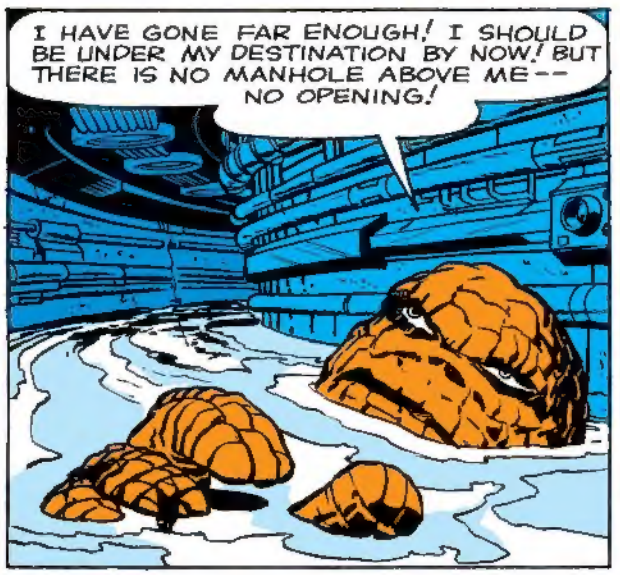

WHY MUST THEY BUILD DOORWAYS SO **NARROW?**
HOLY SMOKE!! A--A--**MONSTER!**

PETE, LOOK! WHAT'S **THAT?**
I DUNNO... BUT I AIN'T TAKIN' ANY **CHANCES** WITH IT!


HALT!! HALT OR I'LL SHOOT!!
OKAY, I **WARNED** YOU!

HIS FIRST SHOT MISSED BECAUSE HE WAS SO NERVOUS! BUT HE'LL NOT GET ANOTHER CHANCE!

DID YOU SEE **THAT?** HE RIPPED THE MANHOLE COVER OUT OF THE GROUND WITH HIS BARE HANDS!
IT'S **IMPOSSIBLE!**


I HAVE GONE FAR ENOUGH! I SHOULD BE UNDER MY DESTINATION BY NOW! BUT THERE IS NO MANHOLE ABOVE ME-- NO OPENING!

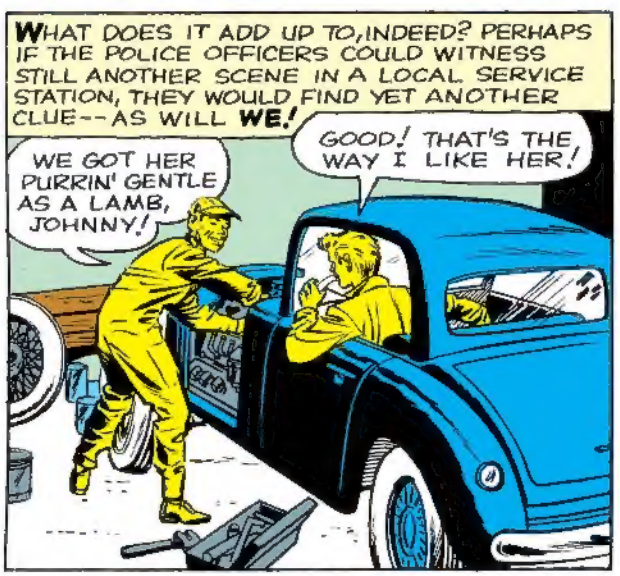
BAH! I CANNOT DELAY! I'LL **MAKE** AN OPENING!

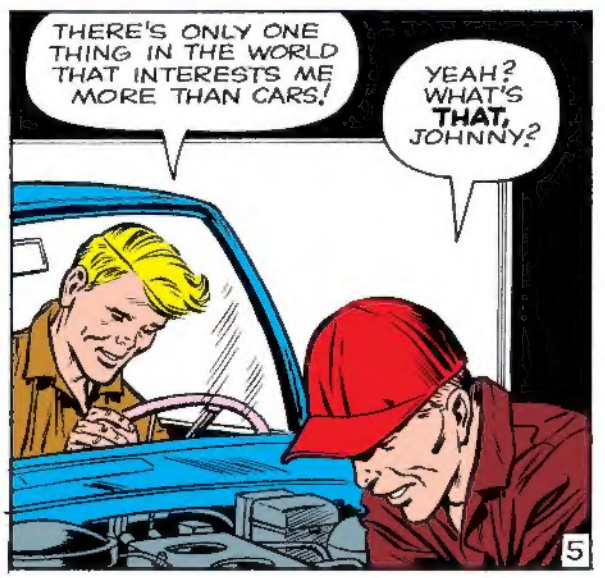
WHAT IS THAT... RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME?? OH, NO... IT'S ALIVE!!
FOOL! DID YOU NOT SEE ME IN TIME?

IT'S A WALKING NIGHTMARE!! HELP!! HELP!!
LILY-LIVERED COWARDS!
IT AIN'T HUMAN! IT'S TOO BIG... TOO STRONG!! IT--IT'S A MARTIAN!

MINUTES LATER, THE POLICE RIOT SQUAD REACHES THE SCENE...
THERE'S NO ONE HERE!
STREET'S DESERTED!
THEN WHO PUT IN THAT DANGER CALL?

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD HAPPENING IN CENTRAL CITY! THOSE WORDS IN THE SKY... THOSE SCATTERED REPORTS OF MONSTERS WALKING THE STREETS...
BUT WHAT DOES IT ADD UP TO, CHIEF? ...WHAT?


WHAT DOES IT ADD UP TO, INDEED? PERHAPS IF THE POLICE OFFICERS COULD WITNESS STILL ANOTHER SCENE IN A LOCAL SERVICE STATION, THEY WOULD FIND YET ANOTHER CLUE--AS WILL WE!
WE GOT HER PURRIN' GENTLE AS A LAMB, JOHNNY!
GOOD! THAT'S THE WAY I LIKE HER!


THERE'S ONLY ONE THING IN THE WORLD THAT INTERESTS ME MORE THAN CARS!
YEAH? WHAT'S THAT, JOHNNY?

HEY, JOHNNY... LOOK!! IN THE SKY!! THOSE WORDS! THEY'RE ALL COMIN' TOGETHER! THEY'RE TURNIN' INTO A NUMBER! THE NUMBER... FOUR!
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JOHNNY! THAT HEAT! WHERE'S IT COMIN' FROM? WHA--? WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?
DON'T WORRY, PAL!
YOU'RE TURNIN' INTO... GASP! A--A HUMAN TORCH!
REMEMBER ME SAYING THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING I CARE ABOUT MORE THAN CARS?
IMPOSSIBLE? INCREDIBLE? CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL, BUT THE FIGURE WHICH HAD BEEN JOHNNY STORM, SCANT SECONDS BEFORE, IS NOW A CAREENING HUMAN TORCH, FLASHING THRU THE SKIES ABOVE LIKE A FLAMING METEOR!
WELL, THIS IS IT!!
!
LOOK! A BLAZING, BURNING COMET!
NO!! IT'S NOT A COMET!! IT'S-- IT'S--
UNLESS WE'RE GOING MAD--IT'S SOMETHING HUMAN!
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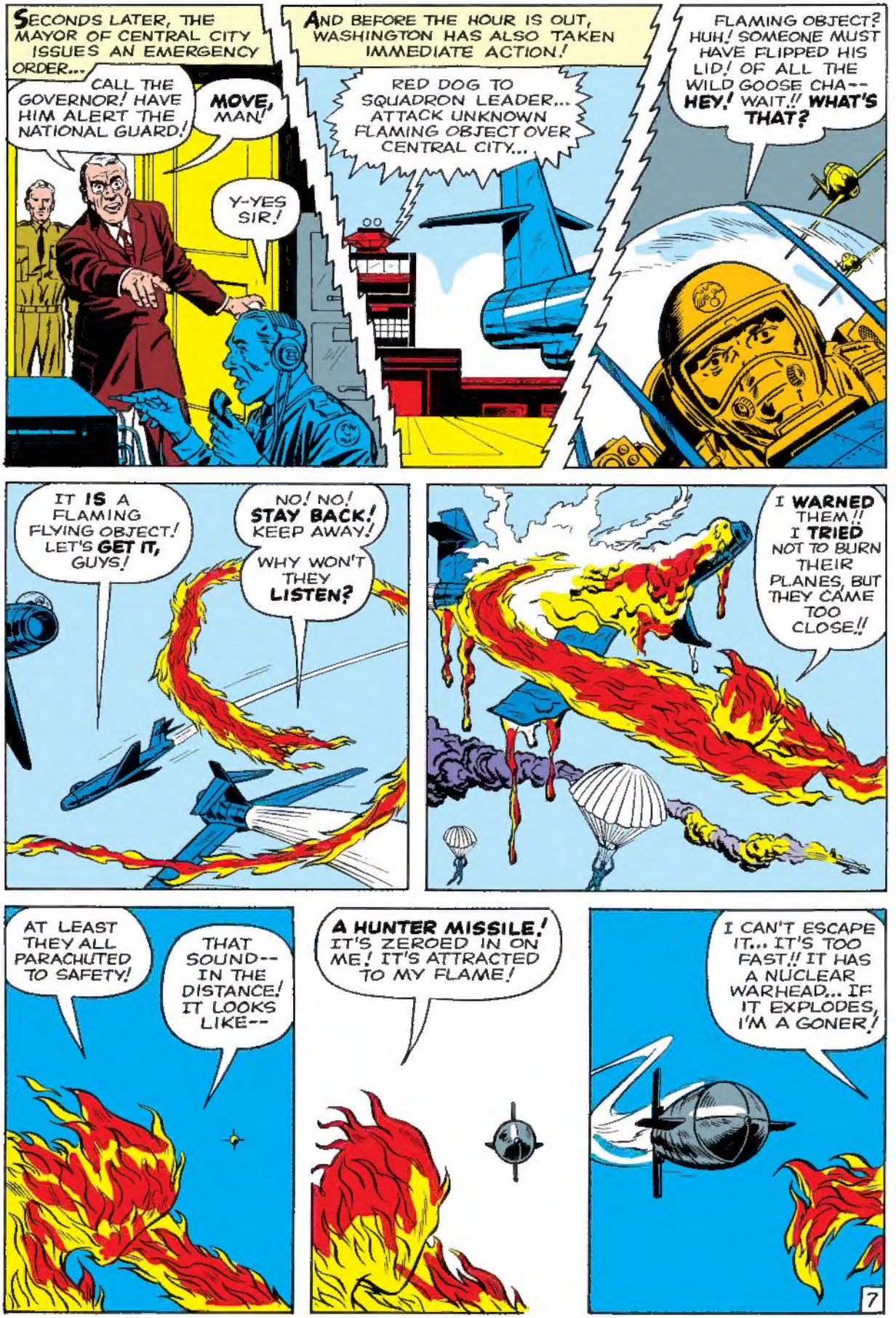
SECONDS LATER, THE MAYOR OF CENTRAL CITY ISSUES AN EMERGENCY ORDER...
CALL THE GOVERNOR! HAVE HIM ALERT THE NATIONAL GUARD!
MOVE, MAN!
Y-YES SIR!
AND BEFORE THE HOUR IS OUT, WASHINGTON HAS ALSO TAKEN IMMEDIATE ACTION!
RED DOG TO SQUADRON LEADER... ATTACK UNKNOWN FLAMING OBJECT OVER CENTRAL CITY...
FLAMING OBJECT? HUH! SOMEONE MUST HAVE FLIPPED HIS LID! OF ALL THE WILD GOOSE CHA-- HEY! WAIT!! WHAT'S THAT?
IT IS A FLAMING FLYING OBJECT! LET'S GET IT, GUYS!
NO! NO! STAY BACK! KEEP AWAY!
WHY WON'T THEY LISTEN?
I WARNED THEM!! I TRIED NOT TO BURN THEIR PLANES, BUT THEY CAME TOO CLOSE!!
AT LEAST THEY ALL PARACHUTED TO SAFETY!
THAT SOUND-- IN THE DISTANCE! IT LOOKS LIKE--
A HUNTER MISSILE! IT'S ZEROED IN ON ME! IT'S ATTRACTED TO MY FLAME!
I CAN'T ESCAPE IT... IT'S TOO FAST!! IT HAS A NUCLEAR WARHEAD... IF IT EXPLODES, I'M A GONER!
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SUDDENLY, THE HUMAN TORCH'S FLAME BEGINS TO DIMINISH... AND, AS THE MISSILE IS ABOUT TO STRIKE HIM, TWO IMPOSSIBLY LONG ARMS REACH ABOVE THE ROOF-TOPS, AND...

GOT IT!!

MOVING WITH DAZZLING SPEED, ONE OF THE INCREDIBLE ARMS HURLS THE MIGHTY MISSILE FAR FROM SHORE, WHERE IT EXPLODES HARMLESSLY OVER THE SEA!

BUT, AS THE FLYING BOY'S FLAME FLICKERS OUT ALTOGETHER, HE BEGINS TO PLUMMET TOWARD EARTH... TOWARD A CERTAIN DOOM!

GRAB ME, JOHNNY BOY!! THAT'S IT!!

WHO **IS** THIS UNBELIEVABLE STRANGER WHO HAS SAVED THE HUMAN TORCH?

YOU'RE SAFE NOW, LAD! YOU'RE SAFE!

IN FACT, WHO ARE **ALL FOUR** OF THESE STRANGE AND ASTONISHING HUMANS? HOW DID THEY BECOME WHAT THEY ARE? WHAT MYSTIC QUIRK OF FATE BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER, TO FORM THE AWE-INSPIRING GROUP KNOWN AS **THE FANTASTIC FOUR??**

YOU ALL HEEDED MY SUMMONS!! GOOD!! THERE IS A TASK THAT AWAITS US... A FEARFUL TASK!

BUT, THERE IS TIME ENOUGH TO LEARN OF THE TASK WHICH FACES THE FANTASTIC FOUR! FIRST, LET US DISCOVER **MORE** ABOUT THEIR ORIGIN--LET US GO BACK TO THAT MOMENTOUS DAY WHEN AN ANGRY BEN GRIMM CONFRONTED DR. REED RICHARDS...

IF YOU WANT TO FLY TO THE STARS, THEN **YOU** PILOT THE SHIP! COUNT **ME** OUT!

YOU **KNOW** WE HAVEN'T DONE ENOUGH RESEARCH INTO THE EFFECT OF COSMIC RAYS! THEY MIGHT KILL US ALL OUT IN SPACE!

BEN, WE'VE **GOT** TO TAKE THAT CHANCE... UNLESS WE WANT THE COMMIES TO BEAT US TO IT!

I--I NEVER THOUGHT THAT **YOU** WOULD BE A COWARD!

A COWARD!! NOBODY CALLS **ME** A COWARD! GET THE SHIP! I'LL FLY HER NO MATTER **WHAT** HAPPENS!!

AND SO, LED BY A DETERMINED DR. REED RICHARDS, THE LITTLE GROUP SPED TOWARD THE SPACEPORT ON THE OUT-SKIRTS OF TOWN!

SUSAN, BEN AND I **KNOW** WHAT WE'RE DOING... BUT YOU--AND JOHNNY...

DON'T SAY IT, REED! I'M YOUR FIANCEE! WHERE **YOU** GO, **I** GO!

AND **I'M** TAGGIN' ALONG WITH SIS--SO IT'S SETTLED!

NO TIME TO WAIT FOR OFFICIAL CLEARANCE! CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT TONIGHT! **LET'S GO!**

BEFORE THE GUARD CAN STOP THEM, THE MIGHTY SHIP WHICH REED RICHARDS HAD SPENT YEARS CONSTRUCTING IS SOARING INTO THE HEAVENS...TOWARDS OUTER SPACE!

SHE'S BEHAVING LIKE A BABY! EVERYTHING IS PERFECT!

YEAH, EXCEPT THE COSMIC RAYS! NO ONE KNOWS WHAT **THEY'LL** DO...

HIGHER AND HIGHER, LIKE A SILVER BULLET, ROARS THE SLEEK SPACE CRAFT...
WE HAD TO DO IT!! WE HAD TO BE THE FIRST!
BUT WE'RE REACHING THE COSMIC STORM AREA... HANG ON!
RAK TAC TAC TAC TAC
HEAR THAT?? IT'S THE COSMIC RAYS!! I--I WARNED YOU ABOUT 'EM!!
THEY'RE PENETRATING THE SHIP!! OUR SHIELDING ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH!
BUT I DON'T FEEL ANYTHING!
NATURALLY! THEY'RE ONLY RAYS OF LIGHT! YOU CAN'T FEEL 'EM-- BUT THEY'LL AFFECT YOU JUST THE SAME!
MY HEAD!! IT--IT'S POUNDING AS THOUGH IT'S ABOUT TO BURST!!
BEN WAS RIGHT!! WE SHOULD HAVE WAITED... SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN HEAVIER SHIELDING!
JOHNNY! WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?
I DON'T KNOW, SIS! MY BODY FEELS HOT-- LIKE IT'S ON FIRE!! I-I FEEL LIKE I'M BURNING UP!!
UGH!! LISTEN TO ME...
...SOMEBODY ELSE TAKE THE CONTROLS... I CAN'T HANDLE THE SHIP ANY MORE! MY-- MY ARMS ARE HEAVY-- TOO HEAVY-- CAN'T MOVE-- TOO HEAVY-- GOT TO LIE DOWN-- CAN'T MOVE!!
BEN!
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AT THAT MOMENT, THE POWERFUL SHIP'S AUTOMATIC PILOT TOOK OVER, AND MANAGED TO RETURN THE SLEEK ROCKET SAFELY TO EARTH, IN A ROUGH, BUT NON-FATAL LANDING!
I--I'M GRATEFUL, WE'RE ALL ALIVE!! IT WAS MIGHTY CLOSE!
BUT, REED...WE FAILED!! AFTER ALL YOUR WORK... YOUR DEDICATION... WE FAILED!
BAH! WHAT'D YOU EXPECT?
BUT WE'RE STILL NOT COMPLETELY SAFE! WE STILL HAVE TO SEE WHETHER THE COSMIC RAYS AFFECTED US IN ANY WAY!
OH, REED... I FEEL SO STRANGE!
SUSAN! LOOK AT SUSAN!!
WHAT'S WRONG?
YOU'RE GASPS FADING AWAY!!
OH, NO!! NO!!
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
SOMEHOW THE COSMIC RAYS HAVE ALTERED YOUR ATOMIC STRUCTURE... MAKING YOU GROW INVINSIBLE!
SIS! I CAN'T SEE YOU AT ALL ANY MORE!
HOW... HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?
THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING!!
WHA--WHAT IF SHE NEVER GETS VISIBLE AGAIN??
LOOK!! I SEE HER!
I'M MYSELF AGAIN! IT HAPPENED SO SUDDENLY... ALL BY ITSELF!
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THANK HEAVENS!! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, MY DARLING!
ALL RIGHT, EH? HOW DO YOU KNOW, WISE GUY? HOW DO YOU KNOW SHE WON'T TURN INVISIBLE AGAIN? HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO THE REST OF US?
BEN, I'M SICK AND TIRED OF YOUR INSULTS... OF YOUR COMPLAINING! I DIDN'T PURPOSELY CAUSE OUR FLIGHT TO FAIL!
AND I'M SICK OF YOU... PERIOD! IN FACT, I'M GONNA PASTE YOU RIGHT IN THAT SMUG FACE OF YOURS!
BEN, STOP! WAIT!! LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU! YOU'RE--CHANGING!
DON'T TRY TO TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF IT, MISTER! I'M GONNA MOP UP THE PLACE WITH YOU!
RUN, REED DARLING! HE'S TURNED INTO A-- A--SOME SORT OF A THING! HE'S STRONG AS AN OX!!
"REED DARLING"!! BAH! HOW CAN YOU CARE FOR THAT WEAKLING WHEN I'M HERE!?
I'LL PROVE TO YOU THAT YOU LOVE THE WRONG MAN, SUSAN! I'LL-- HEY! WHAT--??!
NO, YOU DON'T!!
YOU'VE HAD THIS COMING TO YOU FOR A LONG TIME, BEN!
OH, REED... REED... NOT YOU, TOO!! NOT YOU, TOO!!
WHAT AM I DOING? WHAT HAPPENED TO ME? TO ALL OF US?
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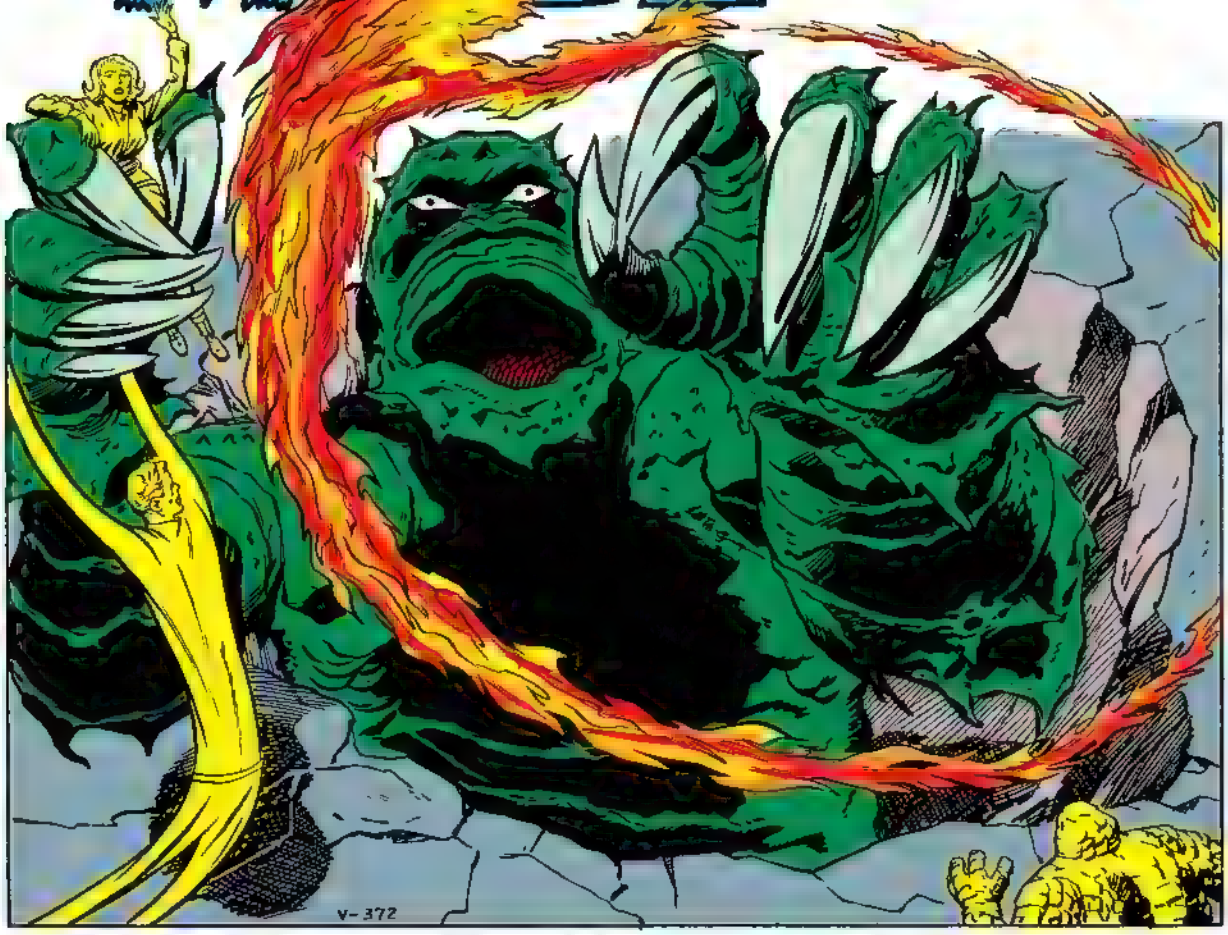
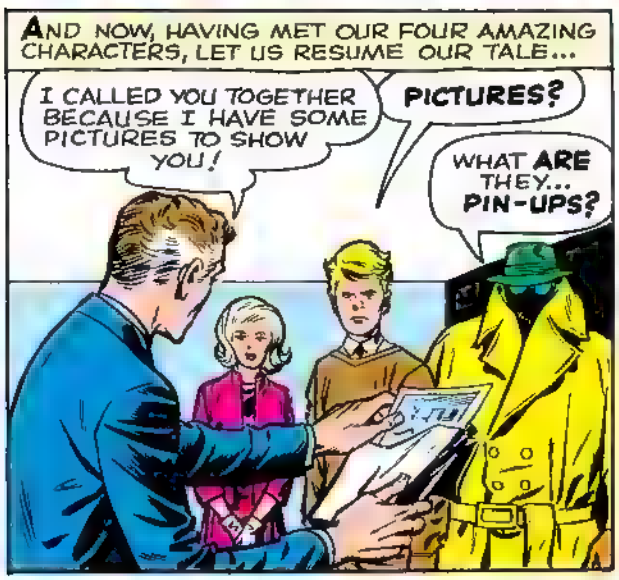
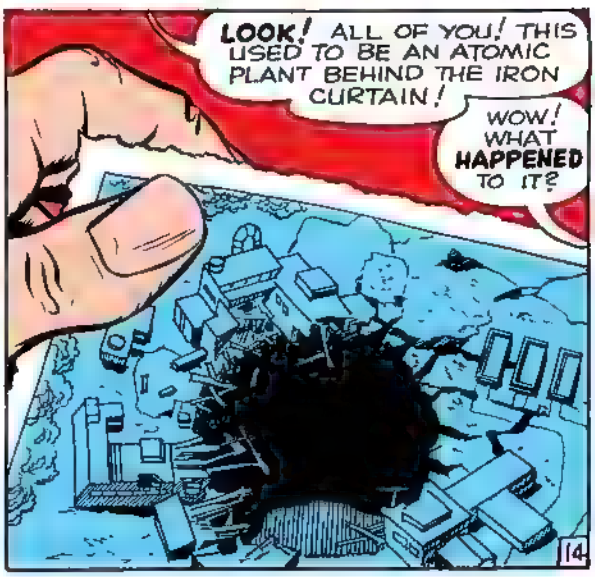
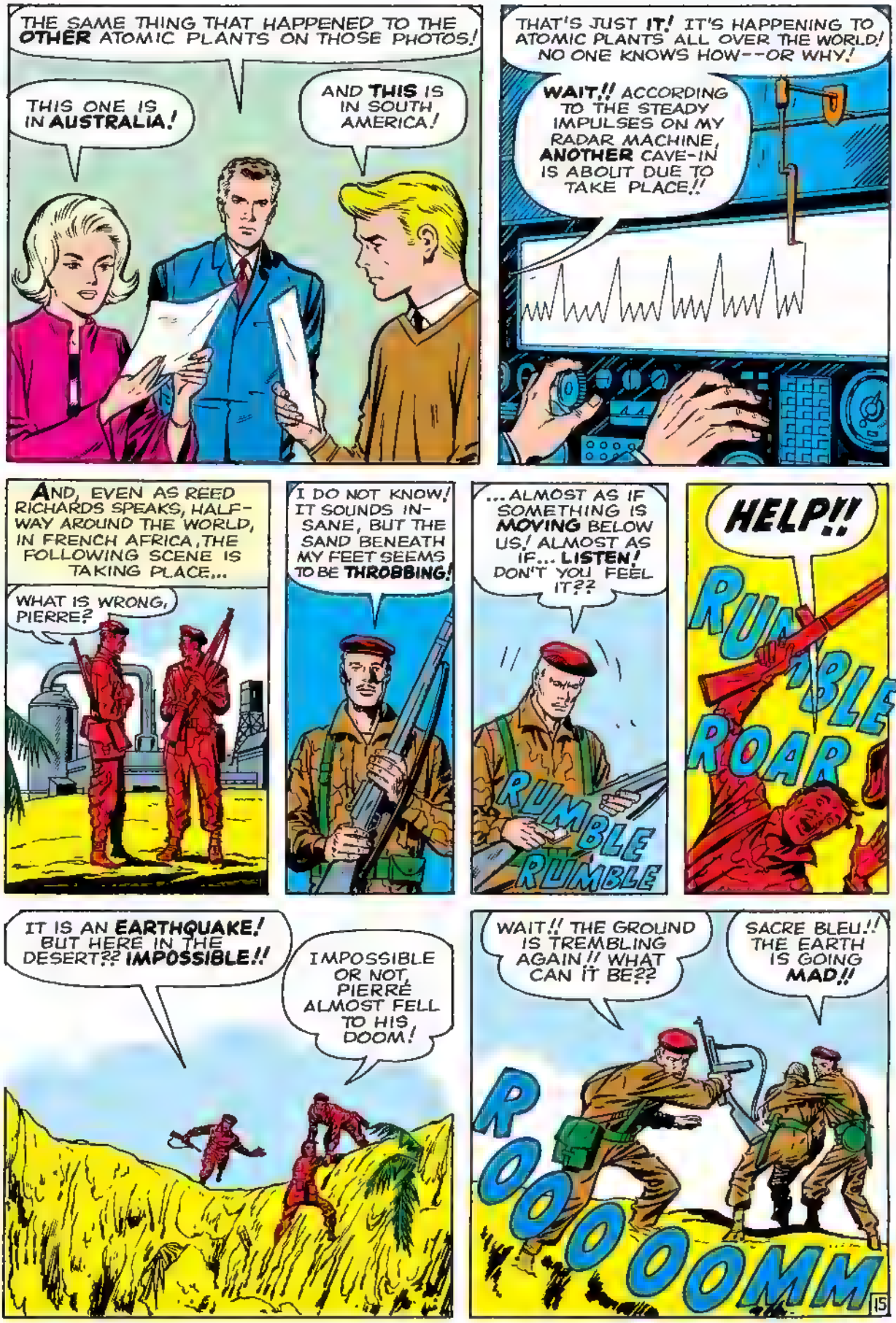
YOU'VE TURNED INTO MONSTERS... BOTH OF YOU!! IT'S THOSE RAYS! THOSE TERRIBLE COSMIC RAYS!
NOW I KNOW WHY I'VE BEEN FEELING SO WARM! LOOK AT ME!! THEY'VE AFFECTED ME, TOO! WHEN I GET EXCITED I CAN FEEL MY BODY BEGIN TO BLAZE!
I'M LIGHTER THAN AIR!! I CAN FLY!! LOOK... I CAN FLY!!
MINUTES LATER, JOHNNY STORM'S FLAME SUBSIDED AND HE LANDED NEAR THE OTHER THREE! SILENTLY THEY WATCHED THE SMALL FIRE HE HAD STARTED IN THE UNDERBRUSH BURN ITSELF OUT!! SILENTLY THEY WERE EACH OCCUPIED WITH THEIR OWN STARTLING THOUGHTS!
WE'VE CHANGED! ALL OF US! WE'RE MORE THAN JUST HUMAN!
LISTEN TO ME, ALL OF YOU! THAT MEANS YOU TOO, BEN! TOGETHER WE HAVE MORE POWER THAN ANY HUMANS HAVE EVER POSSESSED!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE A SPEECH, BIG SHOT! WE UNDERSTAND! WE'VE GOTTA USE THAT POWER TO HELP MANKIND, RIGHT?
RIGHT, BEN, RIGHT!
I'M CALLING MYSELF THE HUMAN TORCH--AND I'M WITH YOU ALL THE WAY!
SAME GOES FOR ME... THE INVISIBLE GIRL!
THERE'S ONLY ONE STILL MISSING... BEN!!
I AIN'T BEN ANYMORE-- I'M WHAT SUSAN CALLED ME--THE THING!!
AND I'LL CALL MYSELF... MISTER FANTASTIC!!
AND SO WAS BORN "THE FANTASTIC FOUR!!" AND FROM THAT MOMENT ON, THE WORLD WOULD NEVER AGAIN BE THE SAME!!
13

THE FANTASTIC FOUR MEET THE MOLE MAN!




AND NOW, HAVING MET OUR FOUR AMAZING CHARACTERS, LET US RESUME OUR TALE...
I CALLED YOU TOGETHER BECAUSE I HAVE SOME PICTURES TO SHOW YOU!
PICTURES?
WHAT ARE THEY... PIN-UPS?




THE SAME THING THAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER ATOMIC PLANTS ON THOSE PHOTOS!
THIS ONE IS IN AUSTRALIA!
AND THIS IS IN SOUTH AMERICA!
THAT'S JUST IT! IT'S HAPPENING TO ATOMIC PLANTS ALL OVER THE WORLD! NO ONE KNOWS HOW--OR WHY!
WAIT!! ACCORDING TO THE STEADY IMPULSES ON MY RADAR MACHINE, ANOTHER CAVE-IN IS ABOUT DUE TO TAKE PLACE!!
AND, EVEN AS REED RICHARDS SPEAKS, HALF-WAY AROUND THE WORLD, IN FRENCH AFRICA, THE FOLLOWING SCENE IS TAKING PLACE...
WHAT IS WRONG, PIERRE?
I DO NOT KNOW! IT SOUNDS IN-SANE, BUT THE SAND BENEATH MY FEET SEEMS TO BE THROBBING!
...ALMOST AS IF SOMETHING IS MOVING BELOW US! ALMOST AS IF... LISTEN! DON'T YOU FEEL IT??
RUMBLE RUMBLE
HELP!!
RUMBLE ROAR
IT IS AN EARTHQUAKE! BUT HERE IN THE DESERT?? IMPOSSIBLE!!
IMPOSSIBLE OR NOT, PIERRE ALMOST FELL TO HIS DOOM!
WAIT!! THE GROUND IS TREMBLING AGAIN!! WHAT CAN IT BE??
SACRE BLEU!! THE EARTH IS GOING MAD!!
ROOOOOMM
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THE ENTIRE INSTALLATION!! IT--IT IS **CAVING IN!**

RRROOMM

BUT THE WORST IS YET TO COME!! FOR, LESS THAN THIRTY SECONDS LATER...

IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN!!

WHAT IS **THAT?**

WHAT INDEED?? IT IS A GIGANTIC PAIR OF CLAWS, THE LIKE OF WHICH HAVE NEVER BEEN SEEN ON EARTH, OR ON ANY PLANET IN THE UNIVERSE!! IT IS UNBELIEVABLE... MIND STAGGERING... BUT **REAL!**

ARTILLERY!! BRING THE ARTILLERY!! HURRY! **HURRY!**

ARTILLERY! OF WHAT USE IS ARTILLERY AGAINST A CREATURE WHOSE HIDE IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DIG ITS WAY UP THRU COUTLESS TONS OF ROCK-HARD EARTH??

ARTILLERY! OF WHAT USE IS ARTILLERY AGAINST A MONSTER WHO CAN CRUSH A HEAVY TANK WITH ONE HAND??

BUT, JUST AS IT SEEMS THAT NOTHING IN THE WORLD WILL HALT THE NIGHTMARE MENACE, THE SHRILL SOUND OF A COMMANDING VOICE IS HEARD... AND THE GOLIATH STOPS IN ITS TRACKS!

ENOUGH! RETURN TO EARTH'S CORE! OUR MISSION HERE IS FINISHED! **GO!!**

FOR EVEN SUCH A MONSTER HEEDS ITS MASTER! A MASTER KNOWN AS... **THE MOLEMAN!!**

BUT WE SHALL RETURN TO THE MOLEMAN BEFORE LONG! FIRST, LET US TURN OUR ATTENTION BACK TO THE FANTASTIC FOUR, AS THEY GAZE IN ASTONISHMENT AT DR. REED RICHARDS' SUPER-SENSITIVE RADARSCOPE...
THERE! IT HAS HAPPENED AGAIN! THIS TIME IN FRENCH EQUITORIAL AFRICA!
BUT HOW? WHY?
THAT'S WHAT WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT!
BY STUDYING THE CAVE-INS CAREFULLY, I'VE PIN-POINTED AN ISLAND LOCATED EXACTLY BETWEEN THEM! THAT IS WHERE WE WILL FIND OUR ANSWER! IT IS KNOWN AS MONSTER ISLE!
MONSTER ISLE! THAT'S JUST A FAIRY TALE! THERE'S NO SUCH PLACE!
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT, BEN!
AND FIND OUT THEY DO! HOURS LATER, ABOARD THEIR SMALL, PRIVATE JET, THE FANTASTIC FOUR SEE A STRANGE MOUNTAIN RISING FROM THE SEA, LIKE AN UNEARTHLY GROTESQUE FACE!! THEY HAVE FOUND... MONSTER ISLE!
THERE IT IS!
LITTLE DREAMING WHAT AWAITS THEM, THEY CLIMB TO THE TOP OF THE FORBIDDING PEAK...
IF THIS IS JUST A WILD GOOSE CHASE, MISTER, I'LL MAKE SURE YOU LIVE TO REGRET IT!
SAVE YOUR BREATH FOR THE CLIMB, GRUESOME!
HOLD IT!! I HEAR SOMETHING!!
IT'S COMING FROM BELOW!
LOOK!! THOSE EYES...
SUDDENLY, A LIVING THREE-HEADED NIGHTMARE HURLS ITSELF AT THEM FROM OVER THE EDGE OF THE PEAK OF MONSTER ISLE!
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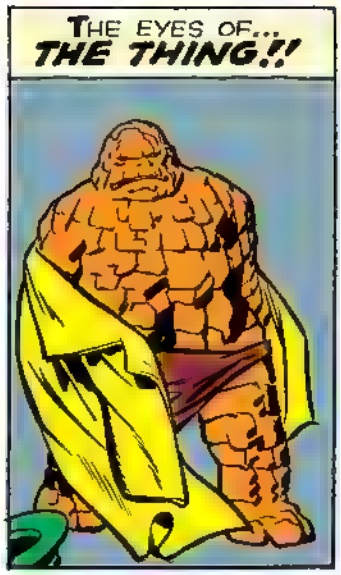
QUICK, SUE! TURN INVISIBLE!
SEEING ONE OF ITS INTENDED VICTIMS VANISH BEFORE ITS EYES, THE MONSTER HALTS... BEWILDERED!!
THERE'S JUST TIME FOR ME TO BECOME MR. FANTASTIC AGAIN! I'LL MAKE A HUGE LASSO OUT OF MY ARM!
GOT 'IM!!
I HAD HEARD THERE WAS A GIANT THREE-HEADED CREATURE GUARDING THIS ISLE... BUT HE SHALL GUARD IT NO LONGER!!
BUT BEFORE MR. FANTASTIC AND THE HUMAN TORCH CAN CATCH THEIR BREATH...
LOOK OUT!!
IT'S A CAVE-IN!
HOLD ON, JOHNNY! HOLD ON!
GULP! LUCKY SUE AND BEN WEREN'T WITH US AT THE EDGE!

FINALLY, THE AMAZING DUO FLOAT DOWN TO THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT...
IT'S PITCH DARK!! WHAT SORT OF PLACE CAN IT BE?
REED! I FEEL SOMETHING!
IT'S A TRAP DOOR IN THE WALL!
IT'S MOVING!
THAT LIGHT!! WHERE DID IT COME FROM!
IT'S BLINDING! I CAN'T SEE!
I-I'M BLACKING OUT!
IT MIGHT BE MINUTES, OR HOURS LATER, WHEN THE TWO MEN REGAIN THEIR SENSES ONLY TO FIND THEMSELVES GARBED IN STRANGE, ADHESIVE-TYPE SUITS WHICH PROTECT THEM FROM THE BLINDING, UNEARTHLY GLOW!
MY HEAD!!
THE LIGHT--IT ACTUALLY CAUSED US TO LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS! BUT HOW DID WE GET INTO THESE SUITS?
SO, YOU HAVE RECOVERED, HAVE YOU!! IT IS ABOUT TIME!!
WHO--WHO ARE YOU? I CAN'T SEE...
AND WHERE ARE WE?
THE REASON YOU CANNOT SEE IS... YOU ARE BLINDED BY THE GLARE FROM-- THE VALLEY OF DIAMONDS!!
--AND AS FOR ME-- I AM THE MOLEMAN!!
19

THE MOLEMAN'S SECRET!

BEFORE WE WITNESS THE BREATH-TAKING CONCLUSION OF OUR AMAZING TALE, LET US GATHER TOGETHER ALL THE LOOSE ENDS! LET US RETURN TO THE TWO MEMBERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR WHO DID NOT FALL BELOW DURING THE CAVE-IN...
REED... AND JOHNNY... GOT TO FIND THEM!!
WAIT! THAT NOISE--BEHIND ME!! WHAT--??



THE SECOND GIGANTIC GUARDIAN OF MONSTER ISLE IS POWERFUL BEYOND BELIEF... BUT HE IS FIGHTING AN ENEMY WHOSE EVERY ATOM HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH COSMIC RAYS... AN ENEMY WHO CAN'T BE STOPPED!
YOU'VE DONE IT, BEN! YOU'VE BEATEN HIM!
WHAT DID YOU EXPECT??
I'M THE THING, AIN'T I??
NOW LET'S GO AND FIND THAT SKINNY, LOUD-MOUTHED BOY-FRIEND OF YOURS!
OH, BEN--IF ONLY YOU COULD STOP HATING REED FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU!
AND WHAT OF REED RICHARDS? AND SUE'S BROTHER, JOHNNY? WE AGAIN DESCEND TO THE DEPTHS OF MONSTER ISLE WHERE WE FIND THEM CONFRONTED BY THE STRANGEST MENACE OF ALL TIME... THE MOLEMAN!
SO, YOU HAVE NEVER BEFORE HEARD OF THE MOLEMAN, EH? WELL, SOON THE WORLD SHALL HEAR OF ME!!
FOR SOON, THE MOLEMAN WILL HAVE THE ENTIRE WORLD IN HIS POWER!
HOW DID YOU GET HERE? WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
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"IT ALL STARTED LONG AGO!! BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF THE SURFACE WORLD MOCKED ME!"
WHAT? ME GO OUT WITH YOU? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!
I KNOW YOU'RE QUALIFIED, BUT YOU CAN'T WORK HERE! YOU'D SCARE OUR OTHER EMPLOYEES AWAY!
HEY, IS THAT YOUR FACE, OR ARE YOU WEARIN' A MASK? HAW HAW!
"FINALLY, I COULD STAND IT NO LONGER! I DECIDED TO STRIKE OUT ALONE...TO SEARCH FOR A NEW WORLD ...THE LEGENDARY LAND AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH! A WORLD WHERE I COULD BE KING! MY TRAVELS TOOK ME ALL OVER THE GLOBE..."
EVEN THIS LONELINESS IS BETTER THAN THE CRUELTY OF MY FELLOW MEN!
"AND THEN, JUST WHEN I HAD ALMOST ABANDONED HOPE... WHEN MY LITTLE SKIFF HAD BEEN WASHED ASHORE HERE ON MONSTER ISLE, I FOUND IT!"
THAT STRANGE CAVERN! WHERE CAN IT LEAD TO?
"I SOON SAW WHERE IT LED... IT LED TO THE LAND OF MY DREAMS..."
DOWN THERE... BELOW-- I'VE FOUND IT!! IT'S EARTH'S CENTER!
"BUT IN THE DREAD SILENCE OF THAT HUGE CAVERN, THE SUDDEN SHOCK OF MY LOUD OUTCRY CAUSED A VIOLENT AVALANCHE, AND..."
"...WHEN IT WAS OVER, I HAD SOMEHOW MIRACULOUSLY SURVIVED THE FALL... BUT, DUE TO THE IMPACT OF THE CRASH, I HAD LOST MOST OF MY SIGHT! YES, I HAD FOUND THE CENTER OF EARTH--BUT I WAS STRANDED HERE... LIKE A HUMAN MOLE!!

THAT WAS TO BE THE LAST OF MY MISFORTUNES! MY LUCK BEGAN TO TURN IN MY FAVOR! I MASTERED THE CREATURES DOWN HERE -- MADE THEM DO MY BIDDING -- AND WITH THEIR HELP, I CARVED OUT AN UNDERGROUND EMPIRE!
A NOTE OF MADNESS CREEPS INTO THE MOLE'S VOICE AS HE SPEAKS OF HIS POWER! AND THEN, HE MAKES HIS FIRST FATAL MISTAKE...
I CONQUERED EVERYTHING ABOUT ME! I EVEN LEARNED TO SENSE THINGS IN THE DARK -- LIKE A MOLE! HERE, I'LL SHOW YOU! TRY TO STRIKE ME WITH THAT POLE! TRY IT, I SAY!!
HAH! I SENSED THAT BLOW COMING! NOTHING CAN TAKE ME BY SURPRISE! AND, I HAVE DEVELOPED OTHER SENSES TOO, LIKE THOSE OF THE BAT--
I POSSESS A NATURAL RADAR SENSE... A WARNING SYSTEM WHICH ENABLES ME TO EVADE WHATEVER DANGER STRIKES AT ME!
COMPARED TO THE MOLE-MAN, YOU ARE SLOW... CLUMSY!! HAH HAH!!
SEE HOW EASILY I DEFEAT YOU... OR ANY OTHERS WHO TRY TO DEFY ME!
NOW, BEFORE I SLAY YOU ALL, BEHOLD MY MASTER PLAN! SEE THIS MAP OF MY UNDERGROUND EMPIRE! EACH TUNNEL LEADS TO A MAJOR CITY! AS SOON AS I HAVE WRECKED EVERY ATOMIC PLANT, EVERY SOURCE OF EARTHLY POWER, MY MIGHTY MOLE CREATURES WILL ATTACK AND DESTROY EVERYTHING THAT LIVES ABOVE THE SURFACE!
AND NOW, AT MY SIGNAL, THOSE CREATURES OF DARKNESS, MY DENIZENS OF EARTH'S CENTER, SHALL DISPOSE OF ALL OF YOU WITLESS INTRUDERS!
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT, MOLE!!
THE THING!!
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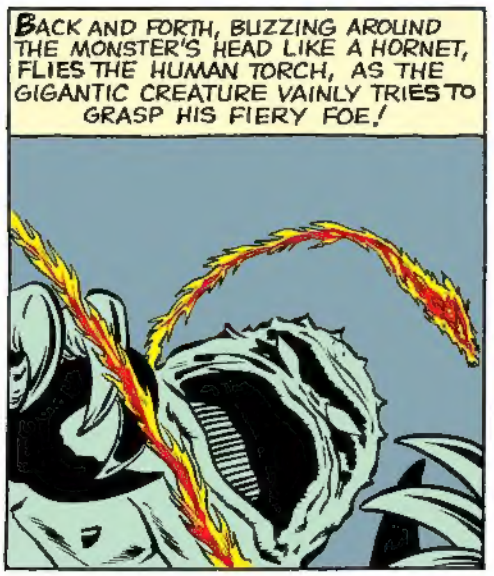
TOO LATE, FOOL! THE DIE IS CAST! THERE IS NO TURNING BACK!!
THING!! LOOK OUT... BEHIND YOU!
BONG! BONG!

HEARING THE MOLE'S SIGNAL, THE LARGEST AND MOST DEADLY OF HIS UNDERGROUND CREATURES PONDEROUSLY RAISES ITSELF INTO THE ROOM... ITS BRAINLESS RAGE DIRECTED AT THE FOUR ASTONISHED HUMANS!

AND THEN, THE FANTASTIC FOUR FLY INTO BLAZING ACTION...
LOOK OUT, REED! I'M GONNA BURN MY WAY OUTTA THIS MONKEY SUIT!

GOOD BOY, TORCH!

STAND ASIDE, GANG! IT'S GONNA GET MIGHTY WARM AROUND HERE!


BACK AND FORTH, BUZZING AROUND THE MONSTER'S HEAD LIKE A HORNET, FLIES THE HUMAN TORCH, AS THE GIGANTIC CREATURE VAINLY TRIES TO GRASP HIS FIERY FOE!

REED! THE MOLEMAN! HE'S ESCAPING!
NOT IF I CAN HELP IT, SUE!

AND HELP IT I CAN!

MOVING LIKE A WELL-OILED FIGHTING MACHINE, THE FANTASTIC FOUR, WITH THE DEADLY MOLEMAN IN THEIR GRASP, RACE FOR THE SURFACE... BUT THEN THEIR EVIL ANTAGONIST SEIZES THE SIGNAL CORD AGAIN, AND...

YOU HAVEN'T WON YET! EVEN **YOU** CAN'T DEFEAT ALL OF MY UNDER-EARTH HORDE!

HURRY, REED... HURRY!

CAN'T YOU EVEN HOLD ON TO ONE LITTLE GUY?

AND THEN THEY COME... LIKE FIGMENTS OF A MAD NIGHTMARE... ROARING, RUNNING, SNARLING... THE MOLEMAN'S ENTIRE ARMY OF UNDERGROUND GARGOYLES!!

BUT THEY HADN'T COUNTED ON THE UNBELIEVABLE POWER OF THE HUMAN TORCH! FLYING BETWEEN HIS FANTASTIC ALLIES, AND THE PURSUING HORDE, HE BLAZES A FIERY SWATH WHICH MELTS THE SOFT EARTH...

THIS WILL CAUSE A ROCKSLIDE, SEALING US OFF FROM THOSE CREATURES!

WE DID IT... WE'RE FREE!! AND THE ENTRANCE TO THE MOLEMAN'S EMPIRE IS SEALED FOREVER!

MOMENTS LATER...

BUT WHERE **IS** THE MOLEMAN?

I LEFT HIM BEHIND--HE'LL NEVER TROUBLE ANYONE AGAIN!

AND THE WORDS OF MR. FANTASTIC ARE INDEED PROPHETIC... AS, SECONDS LATER...

HE'S DESTROYED THE ENTIRE ISLE! HE'S SEALED HIMSELF BELOW--FOREVER!

IT'S BEST THAT WAY! THERE WAS NO PLACE FOR HIM IN OUR WORLD ...PERHAPS HE'LL FIND PEACE DOWN THERE... I HOPE SO!

I JUST HOPE WE **HAVE** SEEN THE LAST OF HIM!

BUT, WHETHER WE'VE SEEN THE LAST OF THE MOLEMAN OR NOT, WE WILL SEE MUCH MORE OF THE MOST AMAZING QUARTET IN HISTORY, IN THE NEXT GREAT ISSUE OF-- THE FANTASTIC FOUR!! DON'T MISS IT!!

THE END